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## News for Immediate Release

May 2, 2019

### Auditor General DePasquale Urges State to Invest in Cybersecurity as Part of Next Education Budget

*Cyberattacks pose constant threat to sensitive taxpayer information and student data*

**HARRISBURG** – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today urged the General Assembly to invest in helping school districts strengthen cybersecurity as part of the next state budget.

“With the number of cyberattacks continuing to rise, the state should make sure school districts have the resources they need to protect themselves,” DePasquale said. “A comprehensive approach to the problem would especially help medium- and small-sized districts shore up their defenses.”

DePasquale noted that no action has occurred at the state level since a 2017 survey by his office showed a majority of Pennsylvania school districts were concerned about cybersecurity and expected the risks will increase.

“Cyberattacks on school districts could jeopardize Social Security numbers, tax data, student records – a wide range of sensitive information,” DePasquale said. “Ransomware, which holds computer systems hostage until a payment is made to the hacker, could push a struggling school district into a dire financial crisis.”

DePasquale said a February malware attack on a school district in Perry County is just one example of the growing risks districts face. Newport School District had issues after an emailed virus compromised the computers of several staff members. Student data was not compromised.

“My school performance audits and conversations with district leaders demonstrate the need for action on this issue,” DePasquale said. “It’s a real challenge for our state’s 500 districts to keep up with the ever-evolving threats they face daily.”

DePasquale encouraged district administrators to contact their legislators to ask for a statewide cybersecurity funding stream.

“A failure to invest now could end up being more expensive in the long run,” he added.

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